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ABSTRACT

The large majority of students in the Kohlbergian tradition have focused on stages of moral judgment development, on moral reasoning, and on research comparing the influence of standard variables such as age, education, and gender on moral reasoning skills. After briefly comparing the four most frequently employed moral judgment tests developed respectively by Kohlberg, Rest, Gibbs, and Lind, this paper presents the rationale as well as reliability and construct validity data for a new, objective self-report moral judgment test, the Padua Moral Judgment Scale (MJS). To investigate the structure of the MJS in a young adult sample, data were collected from a sample of 780 young adults aged 17 to 30 from seven countries: Australia, Belgium, Chile, England, Italy, Ireland and the USA. Confirmatory factor analyses indicated a general as well as hierarchical structure with four group factors, consistent with previous investigations. Results suggest that the structure of the MJS is highly similar among the young adults from seven countries. (Contains 24 references.) (Author)

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Structure of the Padua Moral Judgment Scale: A Study of Young Adults in Seven Countries

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Abstract The large majority of studies in the Kohlbergian tradition have focused on stages of moral judgment development, on moral reasoning, and on research comparing the influence of standard variables such as age, education, and gender on moral reasoning skills. After briefly comparing the four most frequently employed moral judgment tests developed respectively by Kohlberg, Rest, Gibbs, and Lind, we present the rationale as well as reliability and construct validity data for a new, objective self-report moral judgment test, the Padua Moral Judgment Scale (MJS). To investigate the structure of the MJS in a young adult sample, data were collected from a sample of 780 young adults aged 17 to 30 from seven countries: Australia, Belgium, Chile, England, Italy, Ireland and the USA. Confirmatory factor analyses indicated a general as well as hierarchical structure with four group factors (stage 1, stage 2, stage 3, stage 4), consistent with previous investigations. Results suggest that the structure of the MJS is highly similar among the young adults from seven countries.

A considerable amount of work has been done by moral judgment development scholars during the 1980s and 1990s (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987; Gibbs, Basinger & Fuller, 1992; Gibbs & Widaman, 1982; Kohlberg, 1984; Rest, 1979). Kohlberg's 20-year longitudinal study supported his cognitive-development theory of morality, in which moral judgment is viewed as a progression through universal sequential stages (Colby, Kohlberg, Gibbs, & Lieberman, 1983). Gielen (1996), in a review of Kohlbergian research from a cross-cultural perspective, found that although there are more than 120 cross-cultural studies, Kohlberg's theory has undergone only preliminary testing and needs to be tested in a more comprehensive fashion. The psychological study of morality and moral reasoning development evolved into a major research area The large majority of studies in the Kohlbergian traditions have focused on stages of moral judgment development, moral reasoning, and research comparing the influence of standard variables such as age, education, and gender on moral reasoning skills. Studies exploring new and more easily administered tests of moral judgment are uncommon. Kohlberg's approach to measuring moral judgment development culminated in the extremely complex and difficult-to-administer Standard Issue Moral Judgment Interview and Scoring System. This effort was followed by the respective efforts of Rest, Gibbs, and Lind each of whom developed his own approach to the measurement of the Kohlbergian stages of moral development. As we will indicate in more detail in the next section, the instruments used in research on moral judgment development have a number of practical limitations.

Unfortunately, however, few studies have specifically examined objective measures of moral judgment moral development (Kohlberg, 1984; Gielen, 1991,1996; Comunian & Gielen, 1998a). In a series of studies (Comunian, 1998; Comunian, 1999; Comunian & Gielen, 1998b, 2001), on the basis of items that are representative of Italian responses to Gibbs' SRM-SF, we developed a reliable, valid, and practical moral judgment scale, the Padua Moral Judgment Scale (PMJS). We have developed this scale an indigenous Kohlbergian test for Italian respondents. PMDS was constructed as a measure: a) objective, so that people using it do not need to fully grasp Kohlberg's theory and methodology, and b) easily administered and scored unlike Kohlberg's original Moral Judgment Interview (Kohlberg, 1984). Similarly, Gibbs' SRM-SF (Gibbs et al.,1992) can only be scored by an expert who underwent many hours of training. We used the SRM-SF as a basis for the development of the present test, since it has been already validated in Italian culture (e.g., Comunian & Antoni, 1993; Gielen, Comunian, & Antoni, 1994). After briefly comparing the four moral judgment tests developed respectively by Kohlberg, Rest, Gibbs, and Lind, we present the rationale, as well as some reliability and validity data, for a new Kohlbergian

self-report moral judgment test, the Padua Moral Judgment Scale. This measure is a 28-item objective test that can be used by persons such as teachers, who may not necessarily be informed about the details of Kohlberg's theory and methodology.

In order to understand the rationale of the PMJS, it is necessary to briefly describe Gibbs' Social Moral Reflection-Short Form (SRM-SF) test because it is the basis for this test. The SRM-SF (Gibbs, Basinger, & Fuller, 1992) is a "production measure" of moral judgment, but it is not based on moral dilemmas. Instead, it contains eleven short questions that address seven sociomoral values: contract (items 1, 2, 3), truth (item 4), affiliation (items 5, 6), life (items 7, 8), property (item 9), law (item 10), and legal justice (item 11). Each item provides concrete lead-ins such as "Think about when you've helped your mother or father," followed by an evaluation question such as "How important is it for children to help their parents?" Respondents are asked to consider whether such a given value is "very important," "important," or "not important," and they must then explain why the value is important or not. The SRM-SF yields two primary overall types of protocol rating: (1) the Sociomoral Reflection Maturity Score (SRMS) which can range from 100 (pure Stage 1) to 400 (pure Stage 4) and (2) a Global Stage rating which represents the overall sociomoral level of the protocol. In addition to SRMS and Global Stage, the SRM-SF provides a Moral Type B score and some content information. Scoring for Moral Type B helps to identify more balanced, internal, and universalistic forms of moral reflection (Gibbs, Basinger, & Fuller, 1992; Kohlberg, 1984). In particular, Gibbs, Basinger, and Fuller (1992) revised the Kohlbergian typology substantially. They classified modified versions of stages 1 to 4 according to levels of developmental maturity and immaturity. Whereas Kohlberg argued that moral judgment maturity is properly defined by the postconventional level (his stages 5 and 6), Gibbs et al. postulated that the postconventional or so-called "principled" level should not be regarded as the exclusive base of moral judgment maturity or even as a part of a standard stage sequence. Gibbs et al. regarded Stages 3 and 4 as already representing mature moral reasoning. Stages 1 and 2 represent immature or superficial moral judgment. When reasoning in terms of Stage 1, the individual does not understand the moral reasons for rules and finds it difficult to think in terms of reciprocity. When reasoning in terms of Stage 2, individuals have trouble understanding the idea of mutuality in a relationship. They also tend to be self-centered. Stages 3 and 4, representing mature forms of moral judgment, are said to define the cognitive-structural norms for most cultures. Stage 3 thinking entails caring about the mutuality of relationships and the preciousness of human life. At times, Stage 3 thinkers can care so much about what others think of them that they turn into "moral marshmallows" in difficult situations. Stage 4 thinking entails appeals to rights and responsibilities as the basis for an ideal society. Stage 4 conceptions of societal morality expand,

rather than replace, Stage 3 conceptions of interpersonal morality. Mature or profound moral understanding pertains to a broad spectrum of culturally pervasive moral norms and values, such as telling the truth, refraining from stealing, helping others, and saving lives. On the construction of Padua Moral Judgment Test (PMJS), the data suggested to us that this scale may prove useful for research purposes. The 28-items of the scale were developed following both an empirical and a rational approach to test construction. A relatively rigorous procedure was used to identify and discard items. The results of a number of studies (Comunian & Antoni, 1993; Gielen. Comunian & Antoni,1994; Comunian & Gielen, 1995, 2000, 2001) indicated that the PMJS's objective structure was stable and replicable in different samples. The stage means, correlation coefficients, and estimates of internal consistency for each age group are sufficiently high in the samples considered to warrant further research on the reliability and validity of the scale (Comunian & Gielen, 1999, 2001). We also have found that the average stage score would increase with increasing age levels since the underlying stage definitions are based on a developmental model (Gibbs, 1995; Gielen, 1995, 1996; Walker, 1988).In addition, we obtained no significant gender differences on the PMJS scores. This finding is in agreement with Italian moral development research employing the alternative tests by Gibbs and by Lind (Comunian & Gielen, 1996, 1998a,1998b; Gielen & Comunian, 1997) as well as well as the international research literature on gender differences in moral reasoning (Walker, 1991).

The Padua Moral Judgment Scale Based on the previous studies, the last form of PMJS is considered and examined in this study. The PMJS in composed of 28 items that are grouped in 4 parts, each one composed of 7 items with closed answers, each of the seven item represents a stage or mixed stage of the development of moral judgment.. Under each group of seven items, 2 questions with open-answers have been inserted, through which the subject is invited to indicate the number of the item he most agrees with and the number of the item he least agree with, choosing from the 7 preceding items. For each item, participants responded to a four-point frequency scale (ranging from 1 = not at all, to 4 = very much) with the following instruction: "Please read the statements below and express how much you agree or disagree with each one on the basis of your experience and beliefs. In table 1 an example of a part of the scale is shown.

Insert figure 1 about here

The scoring of the questionnaire allows each item to be substituted with the corresponding stage or mixed stage. Two types of score can be obtained:

1 Rating score, intensity level for each stage derived from the subjects answers to the four degree items; the average result is obtained by considering the intensity of the answers given to the stage and mixed stages ;

2 Ranking score, average score of the stage corresponding to the statements with which the subject agrees most and least . The Ranking score is a preference score and isn't affected by the item bias effect within the sample. In addition, the qualitative analysis of this part of the questionnaire provides same content information and help to identify more balanced, internal, and universalistic forms of moral reflection (Moral Type B).

Overall research results suggest that the PMJS stage and mixed-stage Rating and Ranking scores were related in a meaningful way to theoretically relevant constructs. (Comunian,1999; Comunian & Gielen, 2001).In this research the Rating score will be used to calculate the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Study 1) and the Ranking score, as preference score, to calculate the analysis of variance (Study 2).

RESEARCH DESIGN OVERVIEW

The research consisted two phases, Study 1 and Study 2. Study 1 was carried out to ascertain the construct validity of the PMJS and to determine whether the four stages structure actually were observed in seven countries: Australia, Belgium, Chile, England, Italy, Ireland and the USA. The results of study 1 were further used as measure validity of moral development stage sequence for Study 2. Study 2 examined the general structure and cross cultural comparison with data collected from the seven samples. We hypothesized that Confirmatory factor analyses should indicate a general as well as hierarchical structure with four group factors (stage 1, stage 2, stage 3, stage 4), consistent with previous investigations. The structure of PMJS will be examined by using a confirmatory approach.

STUDY 1

Procedure The first step in study 1 was the adaptation of the questionnaire containing 28 items and 8 open questions. The original Italian questionnaire was translated into English by a Italian translator and to prevent mistranslation, the English version was again translated into Italian by another translator who was not engaged in the first translation. The back translation was accurately checked. The same procedure was adopted for the Spanish version. The two versions contained the 28 items identified in original Italian form. In all seven cultures, respondents participated in the study as a partial fulfillment of the course.

Subjects A total of 780 subjects participated in this study completing the Moral Judgment Scale individually or in small groups. They were all young adults, College or University students. Of these, 45% were college students and 55% were enrolled at University courses. In terms of the USA(n = 113) sample's demography, the average age was 20,48 (SD = 2,36), 76% being female and 24% male. The average age of the England (n= 44) sample was 22,93 (SD =2,35) with 50% being female and 50% male. The average age of the Chile sample (n = 253) was 22,90 (SD = 2,52) with 70% being female and 30% male. The average age of the Belgium sample (n = 142) was 26,78 (SD =3,60) with 54% being female and 46% male. The average age of the Italy sample (n= 110) was 20,45 (SD =2,39) with 76% being female and 24% male. The average age of the Ireland sample (n= 50) was 26,70 (SD =7,95)) with 74% being female and 26% male. . The average age of the Australia sample (n=63) was 18,93 (SD =4,51) with 68% being female and 32% male.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Given that the four dimensions of the stages had been further identified in all the previous investigation, confirmatory analysis (Jöreskog & Sorbom, 1995) was used to evaluate whether these same four factors were identified in nine cultural groups. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was based on rating scores on individual items.

For the USA sample, the CFA results confirmed the four-stage model. The fit indexes all point to a good fit between the four stage model and the data, with a goodness of fit index of .98. For the England sample, the fit between the data and the four stage model adequate, with a goodness of fit index of .94. For the Chile data, the fit between the data and the four-stage model is very good, with a goodness of fit of 95. For the Italian sample, the fit between the data and the four stage model was also very good, with a goodness of fit index of .91. For the Belgium data, the fit between the data and the four stage model was very good, with a goodness of fit index of.91. For the Ireland sample, the CFA results also confirmed the four-stage model, with a goodness of fit index of .90 (See Table 2 for detailed results). In short, the CFA results suggest that the four stage model is identifiable in all these cultural groups. It is quite clear that the results support the four stage model in the USA, England, Chile, Belgium, Italy, Ireland and Australia. This result is encouraging. The convergence of results across the two studies suggests that the generality of the four stages identified. The instrument can be useful for cross-cultural research.

STUDY 2

Procedure Having established that there was a same stage structure in each sample, gave us the same confidence to examine a general as well as hierarchical structure with four stages (stage 1,

stage 2, stage 3, stage) and compare the means of stage development across the samples. To compare the means of stage development we used the ranking score. Because there is still the possibility of response bias in different countries, ranking score were used as preference score, free of bias effect. Subjects As mentioned early, we reanalyzed responses from all seven countries samples, which were used in the previous sample. The total sample (n = 780) average age was 22.74 (SD =3,67) of which 67% were female and 33% male.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the general structure of the CFA with data collected from the seven samples the goodness of fit .93 is a very good index to support the general consistence of the stage model of the moral judgment development.

The results of multivariate variance analysis of mean ranking stage preference score across the seven various countries show no significant differences among the higher stage mean scores [F (774,6) = 1.060 p <,38]. The results of both CFA and variance analysis indicate that the "universal structure" of moral judgment development. The findings of Study 2 support the theoretical construct of "universality" of the stage of moral judgment development. Particularly a hierarchic Confirmatory Factor Analysis of all the seven samples lead to an unique general model. The results further indicated that by analyzing ranking score (stage preference) or all the seven countries no significant differences emerge on the variance analysis among stage higher development score. The young adults of the seven cultures show a same moral development stage maturity.

SUMMARY

In study 1, there was consistency in the stage Kolbergian theoretical model of the moral judgment development for the seven countries examined. This indicated that young adults examined on this study use the same stage progression. The results further indicated that the PMJS investigates adequately the theoretical construct of moral judgment development as characterized by the Kolbergian theory, thus supporting the validity of this instrument also used in Study 2. The findings of Study 2 indicate the "universality" of the stage of moral judgment development. Particularly important in the findings is that a hierarchic Confirmatory Factor Analysis of all the seven samples lead to an unique general model, with a goodness of fit of .93. The results further indicated that, by analyzing ranking score (indicating the moral judgment higher score) of all the seven countries, no significant differences emerge on the multivariate variance analysis among moral maturity level scores. Finally through this study it seems appropriate to call our approach " cross cultural general model analysis" because our main concern is in the general model of stages

that can derive among different countries. Although we need more comprehensive data to evaluate the effectiveness of a cross-cultural general model analysis, the following suggestion can be made: In the study of the moral development, it is necessary to integrate and synthesize the basic components of moral judgment development such as stages, mix stages and their progression. This point underlines a limit to the extent to which results of this study can be generalized to the processing of stage development, especially when the data are for cross cultural studies. This study, however, analyzed only a limited number of countries. Results suggest that the structure of the MJS is highly similar among the young adults from the seven countries. Future work will examine various other data between different cultural groups and will provide still more information about moral reasoning development. Since moral development stages are directly related to actions in real contexts, the findings from cross cultural general analysis seem to be more relevant and usable when are integrated with research and intervention in the real world.

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Table 1 Example: One of the four parts from the Padua Moral Judgment Scale

	I disagree	partly agree	I agree	totally agree
1. You keep promises to friends because otherwise you may lose them	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. You tell the truth because it is a principle which governs relationships between people in society	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. You help your parents because children must do what their parents tell them	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. You save a stranger's life because he will become your friend	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. You do not take other people's things because if you steal from others, they may steal from you	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. You abide by the law because laws promote harmony and justice	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. You tell the truth because otherwise you feel guilty	☐	☐	☐	☐

Indicate the number of the statement you agree with most .....and explain why .....

.....

Indicate the number of the statement you agree with least .....and explain why .....

.....

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